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## **Canada**

### **Biotechnology**

# **Mandatory GM Labeling Bill C-287 Defeated 126-91 2001**

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#### **Report Highlights:**

Bill C-287, a bill sponsored by Liberal party MP Charles Caccia that would have forced mandatory labeling of all "Genetically Modified Food", was defeated during the vote in the House of Commons on Wednesday, October 17. The vote was close, 91 in favor and 126 against. The bill is now dead and no further action will be taken on it. Although C-287 has been defeated the issue of labeling of biotech foods, and more broadly the safety and regulation of biotech foods, will now be examined by a parliamentary committee. The Embassy intends to very actively contribute to the Committee analysis and debate.

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Includes PSD changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Unscheduled Report  
Ottawa [CA1], CA

**MANDATORY GM LABELING BILL C-287 DEFEATED 126-91**

Bill C-287 was defeated during the vote on Wednesday October 17 by a vote of 91 in favor and 126 against, with 84 abstentions or absences. (Absences from the House of Commons included the PM, Deputy PM, and the Ministers of Health, Trade, Foreign Affairs, Finance and Natural Resources.)

The Liberal party leadership had not invoked party discipline to ensure Liberal MP's would vote against C-287, and thus had to sway the MPs by argument alone. Which way Liberal MP's would vote was the key consideration – the party holds 172 of the 301 seats in the House. In the days immediately prior to the vote the Government provided MP's with arguments against & alternatives to C-287. The Ministers of Health (Rock), Industry (Tobin), Agriculture (Vancouver) and International Trade (Pettigrew) sent a letter to the Chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health expressing their support for the current voluntary labeling effort and asking that Committee to devote energy to studying the issue of GM food in a comprehensive fashion including labeling, overall safety of biotech foods as well as trade and legal obligations and constraints. As well a fact sheet on the deficiencies of C-287, and mandatory labeling in general, was provided to MP's to convince them to defeat the bill.

Although bill C-287 has been defeated, the issue of labeling, and the safety of biotech foods in general will now be addressed by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health. Thus there will continue to be a need to closely monitor developments in Canada as well as to contribute constructively to the debate in the Parliamentary forum.

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